

U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE ARABIAN PENINSULA: YEMEN AND BAHRAIN

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

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U.S. POLICY TOWARD THE ARABIAN PENINSULA: YEMEN AND BAHRAIN

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2013

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:30 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. The subcommittee will come to order.

After recognizing myself and Congressman Ted Deutch, the ranking member is on his way, for 5 minutes each for our opening statements, I will then recognize other members seeking recognition for 1 minute each. We will then hear from our witness, and without objection, the prepared statements will be made a part of the record, and members may have 5 days to insert statements and questions for the record, subject to the length limitation in the rules.

The chair now recognizes herself for 5 minutes. With so much focus being given to the conflict in Syria, the ever-changing political landscape in Egypt and, of course, Iran's march toward full nuclear breakout capability, it is vitally important that we not lose sight of the big picture and remain engaged throughout the region. The U.S. must look ahead and try to anticipate problems before they arise, by being proactive rather than reactive as all too often we are.

Today, we take a look at two of those countries, Yemen and Bahrain, that may not get much media attention, but whose recent developments are a cause for concern for U.S. national security interests and may have regional implications as well.

After more than 33 years in power in Yemen, the President of Yemen was forced to resign from office in early 2012 as a result of a rising tide of pro-democracy movements in Yemen. Since that time, Yemen has been in a period of political transition as the Yemeni people attempted to draft a new Constitution, implement new electoral laws, and move toward a more inclusive governing body by implementing a national dialogue process.

The U.S. and the international community must support the national dialogue in its effort to get a consensus on how to move the country forward toward a path for democracy. But in order for the political process to stand a chance, the economy and the security situation must all improve in Yemen. There has been a serious and

a worrisome rise in extremism, and civil unrest has not simmered down.

Contrary to what some in the administration believe, al-Qaeda has not been decimated. It is not on the run. It is resurgent throughout the region, and Yemen is no different. The fragile socioeconomic and political situations in Yemen has fostered an environment that allows al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, to gain a safe haven from which to operate, posing a serious threat to Yemen's stability and to our U.S. national security.

But just as Yemen has seen its fair share of uprisings as a result of the Arab Spring, so has Bahrain. Bahrain has served as the long-term headquarters of the United States Navy Fifth Fleet, so it is in the vital interest of our national security to see a stable, unified, and democratic Bahrain. In 2002, it appeared that the Government of Bahrain had set itself out on a path toward democracy. A national action charter was adopted by the people that led the way to Bahrain's first parliamentary elections in nearly three decades and the first municipal election in almost 50 years. Suffrage was extended to women. Political parties were finally legalized, and I introduced a resolution praising these efforts in July 2004. That resolution reaffirmed the friendship between the United States and Bahrain and offered to assist them in the future should any challenge arise on its road to democracy, and that offer still stands.

Fast forward to 2011, it became clear that Bahrain did not reach the end of the path toward democracy. The political dialogue that began in 2011 had failed to bring about any of the reforms required with several prominent members of the moderate reform party as being targeted by the regime for arrest and prosecution. The administration has largely remained silent throughout most of the process, but it needs to be more vocal and supportive of the non-violent moderate reformists in Bahrain and it must stress to the government the importance of a political solution that can only be achieved by the people of Bahrain themselves.

It must also call attention to the growing number of reports on human rights abuses in the country and the increasing numbers of political prisoners. All sides must come together in Bahrain to find a political solution and the administration must work with the government and the opposition to come together to solve their disputes, address human rights abuses and fully implement the recommendations of the Bahrain Commission of Inquiry.

As we convene this hearing today, I look forward to hearing the administration's strategic goals and objectives in both Yemen and Bahrain and what concrete steps we are taking to ensure regional stability as well as furthering U.S. national security interests.

Thank you. And with that, I am pleased to turn to our ranking member, Mr. Deutch of Florida.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I am pleased today that we will have the opportunity to focus on a region of vital importance to the interest of the United States.

And I thank you, Deputy Assistant Secretary Leaf for joining us. I know you recently returned from the region. We look forward to hearing how things are progressing both in Yemen, and in Bahrain.

You know, 3 years ago, inspired by events in Tunisia, the people of Yemen courageously took to the streets to add their voices to the growing discontent with stagnant economic conditions, repression of freedoms and government corruption that seemed to be sweeping the Middle East and North Africa. Within months, the Gulf Cooperation Council presented President Saleh with a plan to cede his 30-year grip of power to then Vice President Hadi. It has now been 21 months since Hadi took over as interim President. The GCC-backed agreement called for national dialogue that would eventually give way to a new Constitution, followed by local and national elections.

By comparison of many of its neighbors, Yemen's political transition seemed to be progressing positively. The national dialogue included 565 representatives from across the political spectrum with a mandate that one-third of the participants be women, while youth accounted for one-fifth of the participants. A secular woman was even appointed chair of one of the committees. However, meetings have stalled since September, and I am concerned that there will be a lack of progress now that difficult questions about Yemen's future are pending.

We must continue to urge national dialogue to move forward with real solutions and mechanisms for implementing its recommendations. We have got to continue to feed momentum toward the drafting of an a new Constitution and eventually new elections. The United States can play an extremely important role in providing technical support for free and fair elections, working with civil society to support an inclusive democratic process and instituting needed economic reforms. But I am increasingly concerned that our efforts to assist the political transition and aid in economic development are often overshadowed by an overwhelming focus on our security relationship with Yemen. Al-Qaeda and the Arabian Peninsula activities in Yemen has proven to be a breeding ground for some of the organization's most influential leaders. As Yemeni security forces struggle to root out terrorists, it raises questions about what kind of training and support the United States is providing on the ground. How has our reliance on drone strikes to reach these high-level targets hindered our relations with the Yemeni people, and what exactly is our long-term strategy for Yemen?

Yemen is widely believed to be on the front line in our fight against terror, but I am concerned that whether our level of security assistance reflects the need. U.S. assistance to Yemen totaled \$256 million for Fiscal Year 2013, but these funds come from 17 different accounts, all with very different objectives.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Leaf, I hope that you will address any ongoing discussions to reevaluate our assistance and provide a long-term strategy for ensuring a stable and inclusive Yemen.

Turning to Bahrain, the United States, and Bahrain have enjoyed, long enjoyed a close partnership by Bahrain housing the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, having hosted it now for over 60 years. This relationship plays an integral part of security in the Persian Gulf. The King has remained a steadfast partner of the GCC and our regional efforts to address mutual security concerns. Since the 2011 demonstrations, the government has undertaken a process to institute various reforms for a more inclusive government. The com-

mencement of a national dialogue led by the Crown Prince was promising, but the continuing violence and recent boycotts by the opposition threatened to unravel progress. The U.S. response to the uprisings in Bahrain has been somewhat puzzling.

And I hope that today, Secretary Leaf, you will be able to provide some clarity as to how the United States plans to balance our security and interests in our close partnership with Bahrain with our expectations for human rights. How do we balance those two?

Our Gulf allies are playing an increasingly critical role in regional geopolitics. How are Yemen and Bahrain affected by U.S. relationships with other regional powers, with Saudi Arabia, with Qatar? And as we work together to counter the Iranian influence in Syria and across the Gulf and prevent a nuclear armed Iran, communication and cooperation is essential.

How do we work on parallel tracks to support democratic values, strengthen economic factors, and stabilize the security of our regional partners? So Secretary Leaf, I recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all policy toward our friends in the Arabian Peninsula, but I appreciate you being here today to shed light on our long-term strategy, and I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, Mr. Deutch.

I am pleased to yield for a 1-minute opening statement to Mr. Weber of Texas.

Mr. WEBER. I am ready to go.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Schneider of Illinois.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I am ready.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Ready to go.

Mr. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

Mr. KENNEDY. I am not going to break the trend. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much and now our committee, the subcommittee, is very pleased to welcome Ms. Barbara Leaf, who is Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Arabian Peninsula at the State Department. Prior to this position, Ms. Leaf was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iraq and previously served as the first director of the State Department's Office of Iranian Affairs. She is also a member of the Senior Foreign Service.

Welcome, Ms. Leaf, and we look forward to your testimony. Thank you, ma'am.

STATEMENT OF MS. BARBARA LEAF, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR THE ARABIAN PENINSULA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. LEAF. Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss two quite important countries for the U.S. in the Middle East, Yemen and Bahrain.

I have just returned from a trip to this region, and I welcome the chance to discuss them with you and ask that my full testimony be submitted for the record.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Without objection.

Ms. LEAF. On Yemen, the U.S. enjoys a strong and comprehensive relationship with the government of President Abd Rabbuh

Mansour Hadi and the Yemeni people. I visited Sana'a last week for 5 days to underscore our support for Yemen's historic transition and continued bilateral security cooperation. Yemen continues to make significant strides forward in its political transition, even while it faces unprecedented challenges. Since the new November 2011 signing of the GCC brokered transition initiative, Yemen has taken several big steps forward, including the launch of a national dialogue conference this march, a gathering of 565 delegates from across the political spectrum, indeed across the country, brought together for the most inclusive discussion of its kind in Yemen's history. The dialogue has accomplished what many thought impossible as Yemen stood on the brink of civil war a little more than 2 years ago. Political elites, tribal elders, women, youth, civil society activists, and representatives of minority communities have gathered to share ideas and develop meaningful recommendations and proposals for Yemen's future. Despite these positive achievements, disagreement over the future state structure has delayed the dialogue well beyond its scheduled September 18 conclusion. We are actively engaging with President Hadi and other Yemeni political leaders to encourage a consensus agreement on principles of the state structure to allow the dialogue to conclude and subsequent transition steps, including constitutional reform, constitutional referendum and national elections, to proceed.

However, there also remains spoilers' intent on disrupting or derailing the transition process, from members of the former Saleh regime to political opportunists bent on bolstering their own support at any cost. While we do not believe these detractors will succeed in their attempts, we continue to make clear that we will not tolerate any attempts to subvert the process. We are in close coordination with the international community in Sana'a as well as the U.N. and other international partners to encourage transition progress. The GCC in particular has played and will continue to play a critical role supporting Yemen throughout its transition. Economic reform and development will also be a key underpinning of the transition success.

Yemen's economy is showing some signs of recovery since the events of 2011. In tandem with international partners, we have made clear to Yemen that undertaking specific achievable economic reforms today, is essential to building the foundation necessary to address the needs of all Yemenis. As Yemen tackles these issues of reform, it continues to cope with serious economic and social challenges affecting the everyday lives of Yemenis. Investment in the economic and social wellbeing of the Yemeni people as well as immediate relief for urgent humanitarian needs is necessary to help realize the transition's full potential.

Finally, the Yemeni Government has made some gains in extending the security in the country, both through military operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and through a challenging reorganization of security institutions. However, as President Obama said in his May speech at the National Defense University, AQAP is the most active organization plotting against our homeland. We have encouraged the Yemeni Government to continue progress on restructuring of the military and security services, which will strengthen Yemeni capacity to secure the country

against internal and external threats. We view continued use of U.S. support for the Yemeni security sector as critical as the country continues to battle an AQAP presence within its borders.

Turning to Bahrain. Bahrain is a major non-NATO ally and a steadfast partner in regional security, host to the Fifth Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, Bahrain is home to our main naval operating base in the Middle East. Our relationship with Bahrain allows us to address threats to national security interests, ensure open sea lanes for international commerce, and counter piracy. The U.S. is committed to this relationship.

During my visit to Bahrain this past September, I met with a wide range of Bahraini interlocutors, from government officials to political society leaders, civil society members. I saw firsthand the importance of this relationship to Bahrainis in general. The complex challenges Bahrain is facing and the ways in which the U.S. can support Bahrain's transition beyond this challenging period in its history, a more stable secure and prosperous Bahrain will enable us to continue to build our strong security partnership, meet our national security goals across the region, and promote reform, human rights, and dialogue.

November 23rd marks the 2-year anniversary of the landmark Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry report. King Hamad demonstrated strong leadership in convening the body and taking on board the recommendations in the report and committing to implement them in full. Two years later, the government has made some progress, but much remains to be done, particularly in the areas of accountability for police abuse, freedom of expression, and media incitement.

The First Deputy Prime Minister's Office has laid out an additional set of measures aimed at addressing both BICI report recommendations, as well as other initiatives that go beyond the scope of the report. These include projects to rebuild mosques and religious structures demolished during the 2011 unrest and construction of new housing tracts. They are positive steps that can help rebuild trust.

As you noted, the Bahraini Government announced a national dialogue in early 2013. Regrettably those talks have broken down, and the opposition societies maintain a boycott of the dialogue that they initiated in September as a result of a deteriorating political environment. An end to the dialogue would leave both Bahrain's political societies and its government with no formal mechanism to negotiate a path forward. We have consistently urged the opposition to return to the table and demonstrate political courage in denouncing unequivocally all violent acts. At the same time, we have consistently pressed the Bahraini Government to take concrete steps that would improve the environment for dialogue. We are deeply committed to working with all parties in Bahrain to move beyond this period of crisis, which, by the way, is a term that every, literally, every Bahraini used with me, whether inside government or outside.

In the end, however, we do agree that Bahrainis themselves must find the solution. It must be a Bahraini-driven solution. But strong leadership is needed from all sides in order to move Bahrain beyond its current situation of impasse. Thank you for the oppor-

tunity to testify, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Leaf follows:]

HFAC Testimony on Yemen and Bahrain

November 19, 2013

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, Ranking Member Deutch, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today to discuss Yemen and Bahrain. I have just returned from a trip to the region and I can assure you that this is an issue of critical importance to the Obama Administration. I welcome the chance to discuss Yemen and Bahrain with you and ask that my full testimony be submitted for the record.

Yemen

The United States enjoys a strong and comprehensive relationship with the government of President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi and the Yemeni people. I visited Sana'a last week to underscore U.S. support for Yemen's historic political transition and continued bilateral security cooperation. A democratic, unified, and stable Yemen will be best able to meet the needs of its citizens and participate fully as a partner in supporting regional security.

Yemen continues to make significant strides forward in its political transition, even while it faces unprecedented challenges. Our policy focuses on supporting President Hadi and the people of Yemen as they seek to achieve an inclusive, representative, and unified political system through this ongoing transition process. We are also partnering with the Yemeni government to meet the critical, near-term needs of its citizens. In particular, our engagement centers on four key areas: 1) the political transition process; 2) economic reform and development; 3) humanitarian relief; and, 4) security and counterterrorism cooperation.

Since the November 2011 signing of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-brokered transition initiative, Yemen has taken several significant steps toward meaningful reform. These include: the December 2011 formation of a National Consensus Government, consisting of former ruling party and opposition leaders; the February 2012 election of President Hadi as the country's first new president in over three decades; and, the launch of a National Dialogue Conference this March – a gathering of 565 delegates from across the political spectrum, brought together for the most inclusive discussion of its kind in Yemen's history. During my recent trip to Sana'a, I saw firsthand how the Yemeni people have come together to support this process.

The dialogue has accomplished what many thought impossible, as Yemen stood on the brink of civil war a little more than two years ago. Political elites, tribal elders, women, youth, civil society activists, and representatives of minority communities have gathered to share ideas and develop meaningful recommendations and proposals for Yemen's future. Nine working groups have discussed an expansive range of topics, including governance, state-building, deep-seated regional grievances, human rights and security. Women represent nearly a third -- and youth a fifth -- of the dialogue's delegates. Participation was also divided equally between the country's north and south, fostering a measure of goodwill among many southerners previously marginalized from political, military, and economic opportunities by the former regime.

Despite these positive achievements, disagreement over the future state structure has delayed the dialogue well beyond its scheduled September 18 conclusion. This stalemate has allowed regional, sectarian, and political disputes to intensify. We are actively engaging with President Hadi and other Yemeni political leaders to encourage a consensus agreement on the principles of the state's structure, so that the dialogue can conclude and subsequent transition steps -- including constitutional reform, a constitutional referendum, and national elections -- may proceed, while the details of state structure are deliberated concurrently. Peaceful deliberation and disagreement are essential features of healthy democratic debates. Indeed, as several prominent Yemenis told me during my recent visit to Sana'a, individuals from all sides are optimistic that there is a way forward and that all of the outstanding political issues can and should be agreed upon, so that the next steps of the transition may proceed.

However, there also remain "spoilers" intent on disrupting or derailing the transition process -- from members of the former regime to political opportunists bent on bolstering their own support at any cost. Given the desire of Yemenis to achieve real change, we do not believe these detractors will succeed in their attempts. Nonetheless, we continue to make clear that we will not tolerate any attempts to subvert the process.

We are in close coordination with the international community in Sana'a, as well as the United Nations and other international partners, to encourage transition progress. The GCC, in particular, has played and will continue to play a critical role supporting Yemen throughout its transition. We maintain regular engagement with our Gulf partners to harmonize efforts. To date, we have provided nearly \$39 million to support the political transition process, including training National Dialogue delegates, mentoring female and minority delegates, and strengthening

civic engagement. We also plan to assist Yemen as it moves forward to constitutional reform and, ultimately, national elections.

Economic reform and development will also be a key underpinning of the transition's success. Yemen's economy has shown some signs of recovery. Following a 15 percent GDP contraction during the turmoil of 2011 that paralyzed government institutions and shut down many private enterprises, and minimal growth in 2012, the IMF predicts there will be around 4.5 percent GDP growth in 2013. However, Yemen is expected to have a budget deficit of more than \$3 billion. Overall unemployment is estimated at 40 percent and youth unemployment exceeds 60 percent. Meanwhile, frequent attacks on energy infrastructure have reduced oil and gas exports that are the principal source of revenue to support Yemen's large and inefficient public sector.

To address these endemic issues we are committed to supporting Yemen's economic reform and development. In tandem with the World Bank, IMF, and other international partners, we have made clear to Yemen that undertaking specific, achievable reforms today – such as reducing crippling fuel subsidies, eliminating ghost government employees, increasing transparency in the budget process, strengthening the private sector, and reinvigorating the government's anti-corruption efforts – is essential to building the foundation necessary to address the needs of all Yemenis. I emphasized while in Sana'a last week that the Yemeni government must take steps toward economic reform to ensure the success of the broader political transition and create the foundation for a prosperous Yemen. We will continue to work with international partners to provide the incentives and support Yemen requires to carry out its reform agenda.

As Yemen tackles issues of fundamental political reform, it continues to cope with serious economic and social challenges affecting the everyday lives of Yemenis. Over 306,000 Yemenis remain internally displaced, an estimated 10.5 million of Yemen's 24 million people are food insecure, one million Yemenis suffer from acute malnutrition, and as many as 13.1 million people lack access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation services, according to the United Nations. Investment in the economic and social well-being of the Yemeni people, as well as immediate relief for their urgent humanitarian needs, is necessary to help realize the transition's full potential. The United States has provided more than \$221 million in humanitarian assistance over the past two fiscal years to help address the needs of the most vulnerable populations in Yemen, in coordination with the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations. This includes food and nutrition

assistance, access to water and shelter, and provision of health care, including immunizations and disease prevention, among other types of assistance.

Ultimately, progress on security will be a key underpinning to the success of Yemen's political transition. The Yemeni government has made some gains in extending security in the country, both through military operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and through a challenging reorganization of security institutions. President Hadi has taken important steps toward restructuring Yemen's military and security services, including issuing decrees in January and April 2013 that outlined a new brigade structure, and undertaking other initiatives to enhance the professionalism and capacity of Yemen's armed forces. We have encouraged the Yemeni government to continue progress on this important aspect of the transition agreement, which will strengthen Yemeni capacity to secure the country against internal and external threats. I underscored this point during my recent visit to Sana'a. We also have concerns that external actors, including Iran, continue efforts to undermine Yemen's transition in order to destabilize the region.

We are encouraged by the counterterrorism efforts President Hadi and the Yemeni government have taken, and remain committed to continued close coordination in the fight against terrorism. Through the steadfast support of the United States and the efforts of President Hadi, Yemen has reclaimed territory in the south previously under AQAP control and has taken steps to strengthen border security. Despite this, AQAP continues to pose an immediate security threat to Yemen, the region, and to the United States. As President Obama said in his May speech at the National Defense University, AQAP is the most active organization plotting against our homeland. The Yemeni government has the will to counter AQAP, but does not have the capacity at this time to extend security throughout all parts of the country.

Continued U.S. support for the Yemeni security sector is thus critical as the country continues to battle an AQAP presence within its borders. Our security assistance to Yemen focuses on increasing Yemeni capacity to secure the country against AQAP and other threats through a comprehensive strategy that addresses the country's critical security challenges. Our assistance seeks to develop the capacity of Yemen's security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations and to secure maritime and land borders and territorial waters. We also support programs to counter violent extremism in Yemen and build law enforcement capacity.

To sustain Yemen's ongoing security sector reform and counterterrorism efforts throughout the transition period, the United States provided roughly \$87 million in Department of State-funded security assistance to Yemen over the past two fiscal years, as well as nearly \$161 million in Department of Defense-funded programs to train and equip the Yemeni security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations.

Bahrain

If you will permit, I will now turn to Bahrain. Strategically situated between Saudi Arabia and Iran, Bahrain is a major non-NATO ally and a steadfast partner in regional security. As host of our Fifth Fleet and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT), Bahrain is home to our main naval operating base in the Middle East. Our relationship with Bahrain allows us to work cooperatively to address threats to our common security interests, ensure open sea-lanes for international commerce, and counter piracy. The United States is committed to this important relationship.

During my first visit to Bahrain as Deputy Assistant Secretary this past September, I met with a wide range of Bahraini interlocutors, ranging from government officials to political society leaders to civil society members. I saw first-hand the importance of this relationship, the complex challenges Bahrain is facing, and the ways in which the United States can support Bahrain's transition beyond this challenging period in its history.

A more stable, secure, and prosperous Bahrain will enable us to continue to build our strong security partnership and promote reform, human rights, and dialogue. Beginning in February 2011, the country experienced a sustained period of unrest, with mass protests calling for political reform. At the urging of international partners, including the U.S., and in response to this unrest, which was marked by mass arrests and deaths of a number of protesters as well as security personnel, the Bahraini government launched a political reform process in the summer of 2011. This process has made some important strides, but it has not yet gained sufficient momentum to move Bahrain definitively beyond this unrest.

Bahrain continues to suffer from low-level street violence, including the use of crude improvised explosive devices that have resulted in numerous security force casualties. A small but violent set of groups seeking the overthrow of the Bahraini government are engaging in increasingly provocative actions against security forces which have led to injuries and a number of deaths. Overall, the number and tempo of violent incidents has decreased in recent months. While none of these

incidents have been directed at U.S. mission or military personnel, we continue to closely monitor these trends and provide regular updates to American citizens residing in Bahrain.

November 23 marks the two year anniversary of the landmark Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) report, promulgated by an independent body of experts convened by King Hamad to study and provide recommendations to address the government's response to the 2011 protest movement. King Hamad demonstrated strong leadership in convening the body, accepting the recommendations in the report, and committing to implement them in full – a unique undertaking in response to some of the unrest we have witnessed across the region during the last years. Two years later, the Bahraini government has made some progress in implementing these recommendations but much remains to be done, particularly in the areas of accountability for police abuse, freedom of expression protections, and media incitement.

The First Deputy Prime Minister's office, led by Crown Prince Salman al Khalifa, has laid out an ambitious set of measures aimed at addressing a number of the BICI report recommendations as well as other initiatives that go beyond the scope of the report. Among many efforts, these include projects to rebuild mosques and religious structures demolished during the 2011 unrest as well as the construction of new housing tracts for a diverse group of Bahrainis. These are positive steps that can help rebuild trust.

The Bahraini government recognized the need for a dialogue process to address the range of concerns from the political societies. In early 2013, the Bahraini government announced a National Dialogue, an initiative that brought together 27 Bahraini ministers, Parliamentarians, and members of opposition societies and loyalist societies. This could be an important mechanism to promote engagement and reconciliation, and we have strongly supported this effort since its inception.

Regrettably, however, talks have broken down and the opposition societies continue to maintain the temporary boycott of the dialogue they initiated in September as a result of a deteriorating political environment. Certain measures by the government—the Ministry of Justice's order regulating meetings between political societies and international diplomats, and the charges against senior opposition members including Wifaq leaders Khalil Marzooq and Ali Salman—have had a chilling effect on the dialogue and have restricted the space for opposition activity. At the same time, opposition societies continue to boycott mechanisms that do not produce immediate results, an approach that we believe,

unfortunately, undermines reconciliation efforts. An end to the dialogue would leave both Bahrain's political societies and its government with no formal mechanism to negotiate a path forward. We have consistently urged the opposition to return to the table and demonstrate political courage in denouncing unequivocally all acts of violence as well as those committing such acts; at the same time, we have consistently pressed the Bahraini government to take concrete steps that would improve the environment for dialogue. We are pressing all sides to demonstrate courageous leadership to build a positive environment and move forward constructively in this important forum.

We are deeply committed to working with all parties in Bahrain to move beyond this period of crisis – a term used by literally every Bahraini I spoke with in September, whether inside or outside government – and continue to build on our strong bilateral relationship. We believe this vision is best realized by pursuing a political dialogue, implementing promised reforms, and ensuring the protection of human rights, all efforts the Bahraini government has initiated. There is a strong need in Bahrain to cultivate voices of moderation, to drown out those who otherwise incite and feed the kind of polarization that is surely not in keeping with Bahrain's historical traditions of a harmonious multi-ethnic society. We are engaging intensively with the Bahraini government, political societies, civil society members, and Bahrain's neighbors to realize this vision. In the end, however, we agree with Bahrainis that the solution must be Bahraini-driven. We call on responsible persons from all parts of Bahraini society to demonstrate leadership in the quest for reconciliation and real dialogue. Strong leadership is greatly needed from all sides in order to move Bahrain beyond its current period impasse.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much. Thank you for that testimony, and thank you for the written testimony as well.

Ms. Leaf, in May 2012, President Obama issued Executive Order 13611, blocking property of persons threatening the peace, security, or stability of Yemen. This gave the Treasury Department authority to freeze U.S.-based assets of anyone deemed to be obstructing the political transition in Yemen or who is engaged in activity that threatens Yemen security or political stability, yet I believe that no individual or entity has yet been sanctioned under Executive Order 13611. And will sanctions now be considered as we see some obstruction taking place once again in Yemen?

How effective has this tool been if we have not yet used it, and do you believe that it could be effective in helping to create a stable environment for the political transition to proceed? And I will continue, and then I will let you answer if you could.

It is clear that the economic situation in Yemen is rapidly deteriorating. Yemen relies heavily on foreign assistance from neighboring countries in the Gulf, most notably, its neighbor to the north, Saudi Arabia, but also the United States. However, late last month, Saudi Arabia said that it would halt its aid to Yemen, and to make matters worse, it has been deporting Yemeni workers from Saudi Arabia by the tens of thousands.

You testified that we will continue to work with our international partners to provide the incentives and support Yemen in carrying out what we hope will be its reform agenda. What incentives are we providing? Have we been using our leverage with the GCC to get them to provide much more of the needed development assistance for Yemen? And in Fiscal Years 2011 and 2012, Yemen received about \$27 million in economic support funds. In Fiscal Year 2013, State requested \$38 million, and now, in Fiscal Year 2014, you have requested \$45 million. What is the justification for this increase in ESF funds, and what kinds of programs do we want to implement or augment with that additional money? What kind of return on investment are we seeing with all of our assistance to Yemen?

Thank you very much, Madam.

Ms. LEAF. Thank you for that set of questions. First, to the issue of sanctions, whether they be bilateral sanctions or U.N.-based sanctions. I would say that at this point, we are closely evaluating the situation and whether there is a need to go forward with anything specific at this time. We are in very close and constant touch with the government, with President Hadi himself. I met with him a week ago during my visit, and we went over the proximate set of obstacles to concluding this phase of the transition, which means wrapping up the dialogue.

I think we are going to evaluate carefully before we move. We have a number of tools, obviously, available, and we have been in discussion with what we call the Group of 10 Ambassadors, missions in Sana'a, as well as partner countries.

I stopped in Riyadh on the way home from Sana'a to discuss these issues. We want to allow President Hadi and those who are directing, who are running the national dialogue to take the steps that they want to do, not get out in front of them, but be ready to act as needed. So we are in the process of evaluating exactly this

right now. I would say it is—while there is a degree of obstructionism by former regime elements, there are also genuine political issues at play right now that are—that have to be resolved. They mostly relate to the north-south divide and the issues as to how a future state set of structures will be elaborated.

So there are legitimate political issues that need to be finessed. And then there is also elements of what I would call possible obstructionism. Now, whether they are enough to block the conclusion of this phase is yet to be determined. But we will be ready to assist President Hadi all along the way in this because it is a critical first step, and you—and this step will then take us to the next, or take Yemen to the next.

On the issue of economic assistance, of course, Saudi Arabia is by far the largest donor of the group of donor countries. The GCC as a block have pledged something on the order of \$4.4 billion, and of that, Saudi funds are \$3.25 billion. There have been ongoing discussions among donors and with Yemeni Government, both on a bilateral basis and in other groups, such as the Friends of Yemen, about how the Yemeni Government can best leverage those funds. To put it politely, there is endemic corruption and a certain large dysfunctionality in Yemeni Governments that goes back three decades. Donors naturally want a fair degree of accountability so that their funding goes against the areas of need. We have, as donors set up and the World Bank helped to craft this approach, what we call a mutual accountability framework, an executive board that is going to be the liaison between Yemeni Government and donors to ensure that the funding can flow and the funding can flow directly to the needs defined. So that was one of the issues that I discussed both with the government as well as with the donor community in Sana'a.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Let me just interrupt you a second because I had another question. With the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry they had made 26 recommendations. Has the government implemented those? And that is dealing with the investigation and reporting of a pro-democracy protest that took place between February and March 2011. What can you tell us about that?

Ms. LEAF. We issued a report, a sort of a report card, if you will, in August on this sort of the state of play on BICI recommendations, and I would say it is a mixed bag. The main shortcomings are in accountability. Accountability for abuses, excesses committed by security forces during the unrest. Obviously, there are some structural reforms that need to be tackled, and I think it is fair to say the government is beginning those—is putting those steps in place. But accountability, they have certainly fallen short and that is something that we have raised regularly with the government. I met with the new ombudsman this summer. He has started work pretty energetically, he and his team. This is a piece of structural reform that I think will essentially help in the accountability piece.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much, I appreciate it.

Mr. Deutch is recognized.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Leaf, I am concerned that there has been so much focus on completing the national dialogue in Yemen,

that other really important, critically important factors have been overlooked. It is my understanding that none of the committees in the national dialogue have focused on any large-scale economic issues, which was a key driver of the 2011 unrest. What are we doing? What is the United States doing to assist with the economic development issues or the kinds of economic reforms that ultimately will be necessary to secure any sort of IMF loan?

Ms. LEAF. You know, the thing that struck me when I was in Sana'a is that basically all eyes are focused now on this end game of the first phase of the transition timeline. All eyes are focused on that, even in places like the Ministry of Defense, there is sort of a waiting to see how this finishes out. The working groups, there are nine of them, as you may know, have tackled a range of issues that will go into drafting a new Constitution. But the issues that have really seized the dialogue and that have sort of gripped them at this point relate to the north-south cleavage, which is a critical piece of future stability to get past.

We are putting—we and other donors, the donor community, are putting money against efforts to improve in the immediate term, because the government of President Hadi of course, is a transition—transitional government, and hereto, frankly, I would say even the government ministers who were in charge of these areas, the foreign minister himself, have regretted that there is not enough energy and push by the government to tackle these structural reforms. I would say, frankly, that there is a sense of reluctance to do things that are politically risky right now. The more so because of this stalemate right now that has developed over this end game piece of the national dialogue.

But we are putting money toward a variety of sectors, and they would help the government improve social services delivery, which is a critical issue, and was a—has been long been a flash point of instability, especially in the south, which has felt substantially shortchanged, and to promote sustainable policy reforms. But I would say that we have—what we are trying to do is help the Yemenis, the dialogue, participants, and President Hadi, get over this political hump even as we are beginning to bear in on some of the structural economic issues, and the Yemenis are in a prolonged conversation with the IMF about a loan program. But they are, shall we say, reluctant to tackle some of the reforms right now that they need to do.

Mr. DEUTCH. But what are we doing to help with that? I understand the focus on helping to deliver what services and the rest, but on the requirements that the IMF would demand, any sort of reforms that would help address those fundamental issues, what are we doing?

Ms. LEAF. They are—we are pushing them. We are pushing them. All of the donor community is pushing, you know, with the force of a large community to get them to do things on essentially ghost workers, cleaning out the rolls of the government, pension rolls, and tackling fuel subsidies. We are looking at some incentives to help them over this hump.

Mr. DEUTCH. And the Friends of Yemen Group, which was initially organized, the United States, Britain, and 24 other countries, has pledged nearly \$8 billion. Only \$2.2 billion, it is my under-

standing, only \$2.2 billion has been delivered. You spoke about corruption. You spoke about efforts that are underway to try to address that to make sure the dollars get where—the money gets where it is supposed to. Is that enough to convince our friends to fulfill their pledges? What do they need to see for their commitments to be upheld?

Ms. LEAF. I think so. They have just appointed the executive board. I met with the interim director of the board. I do think it will be enough to start moving things forward. So yes.

Mr. DEUTCH. And if I may, Madam Chairman, just for one last—

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Absolutely.

Mr. DEUTCH [continuing]. Thing on Bahrain. The Crown Prince has taken a lead in Bahrain in negotiations with the opposition, instituting reforms. How much leeway does the Crown Prince really have? How much space does he really have to accomplish the reforms?

Ms. LEAF. You know, Congressman, as the King appointed him as First Deputy Prime Minister last spring. I, you know, it is early days to see how far he is going to get in some of the things that he has laid out, but what we have seen is he has got a pretty ambitious plan that combines, as I said, elements of BICI implementation, which the King himself has committed fully to implement. So that is already—that is sort of already part of the record or the government's public commitment.

He has a slate of other activities and programs that he would like to take forward. We don't really, I would say, peg everything on the Crown Prince or the First Deputy Prime Minister. We are looking at this as a whole of government requirement, and we work with all of the ministers, the King, the Prime Minister. The government owns this whole set of problems, not just the First Deputy Prime Minister. So we don't personalize it to say that all of our efforts hang on him. He is an important figure in the government, but there are line ministries which have responsibility in both accountability as well as the larger reform effort.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. Deutch, thank you.

Mr. Weber of Texas is recognized.

Mr. WEBER. Madam Chair, why don't you pass me up right now and get back to me.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Sure. All right. Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. KINZINGER. I don't have any questions.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Dr. Yoho?

Mr. YOHIO. Thank you, Chairman Ros-Lehtinen, for holding this very important hearing.

Ms. Leaf, thank you for lending your considerable expertise into the hearing on the very important issues of the United States policy toward Yemen and Bahrain. The escalating political uncertainty in both countries should give us all pause, so as we can evaluate our strategy in the region and make sure it is the most effective it can be at securing our national interests while promoting peaceful democratic reforms. I look forward—unfortunately, I missed your opening lines, but I look forward to this hearing to

find out how we can better utilize the aid we give, not just in money and food but the military, how we can utilize that better to get a more favorable outcome. Because what I see is a repeat of so many of the policies we have done in the Middle East. In your experience, you know, we promote democracy, but yet we do that in a country that doesn't believe the same way we do. How can we better approach that to get the results that we both want, you know? I know there is something on their side that they want, and there is something on our side that we want. What would you recommend to do different than we have maybe done in the past?

Ms. LEAF. You know, the interesting thing about Yemen, is that even while we, the country, the government is grappling with this huge, really seismic political transition, our own mission is working in pretty difficult circumstances in terms of the security environment, and yet we get out and we engage across the board in all of the critical sectors where action by the Yemeni Government and by us and other donors is really key to them being successful in this.

So that is in military restructuring where our advice to the military and security services is quite critical and is highly valued. It is in counterterrorism assistance and essentially trying to help stimulate and grow their capacity to tackle the internal fight to secure their borders, maritime and to take the fight to al-Qaeda. But on the political and economic, our small and hardy but very talented and committed staff, both USAID and State, works up and down the spectrum of political activists and civil society members and is really engaging through both with the national dialogue but also the elements of society that have become newly active in a way that really Yemen has never seen before.

Mr. YOHO. All right, let me ask you something else. Do they have a workable Constitution?

Ms. LEAF. Constitution drafting is the next step.

Mr. YOHO. All right, is there—I mean, the thing that made our country so great, it was from the ground up, and what we have learned is, you know, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness for all, and you can't have personal freedom without economic freedom.

Ms. LEAF. Okay.

Mr. YOHO. Are they going to have things in there like property rights and human rights and things like that that they would agree on, that, again, is more of a Western value that we don't see so much, like the freedom of religion, the freedom of free speech, the freedom to organize. Do you see that on the horizon as something that will happen over there, and is that something—I guess the big thing that helped us here in the early years in the 1700s and the 1800s was the knowledge that the base, the population had and the understanding of those rights. Is that feasible in that country or in Bahrain?

Ms. LEAF. Sir, they are very, very different cases, but to take Yemen, which on any given day, you know, has pretty daunting challenges, I mean, across the board. I mean, you know, you have a population of 24 million; 40 percent unemployment; you know, 1 million cases of what is termed acute malnutrition; and almost 50 percent of the population has what we call food insecurity; and a significant portion of the population struggles to get access to clean

water and sanitization services. So, on the one hand, you have got this daunting economic picture; on the other hand, you have got a pretty daunting security picture.

Mr. YOHO. So, at this point right now, they are more concerned about survival than a Constitution and property rights, and all that.

Ms. LEAF. Well, not so, not so entirely. Yes, there are people who are just struggling to survive every day, but the thing about this dialogue, which is so extraordinary, is it is tapped into people across the country that have really never had a voice. And I tell you, I spent—

Mr. YOHO. I am going to have to cut you off because my time has expired.

Ms. LEAF. Okay.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. We will let her finish.

Mr. YOHO. Okay, thank you, Miss Chairman.

Ms. LEAF. I spent a whole afternoon with about three or four dozen extraordinarily outspoken and feisty Yemeni women, many of whom were participants in the national dialogue, others who were simply active in various civil society domains. And having wrestled through this process, as sort of a minimal floor of participation, they are determined to hang on to it, come what may. And they are determined to hang on to it through the next steps of the constitutional drafting. But all of these people who are new voices in the national dialogue are going back to their communities and taking back that experience. So it is really, I have to say, it is quite extraordinary. We won't see a Constitution that looks like ours.

Mr. YOHO. Right.

Ms. LEAF. It will be a Yemeni-style Constitution, but I think it will respond to some things.

Mr. YOHO. Thank you, ma'am.

Thank you, Ms. Leaf.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Dr. Yoho.

Mr. Schneider.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you for calling this hearing.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Leaf, thank you for being here, as you said, addressing the issues in two very important countries.

Starting first with Yemen, and just to put it in maybe a frame, in your words, this is a historic seismic transition in the context of unprecedented challenges, including spoilers inside the country, as well as urgent humanitarian needs. You kind of touched, Yemen is the poorest of the Arab countries. It has food insecurity widespread. It has a lack of water, a shrinking supply of water. And yet, at the same time, for all of those challenges, we are dealing with the presence of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, an external threat, but a threat that is not just to Yemen but to the entire region. Both the historic transition and the challenge to al-Qaeda requires, again, a word you used a few times, capacity building. What are the most critical issues from our standpoint as we are looking at American policy, vis-à-vis Yemen that we need to focus on to make sure that there is capacity to address the humanitarian needs internally, but also to ensure that AQAP is a threat we can work to eliminate rather than see expand?

Ms. LEAF. Thank you, Congressman.

You know, we are, and I saw this myself in meeting with the Group of 10 Missions, who meet on a weekly basis in Sana'a and basically compare notes, compare approaches, and coordinate tightly as the international community, and that includes the U.N.'s Special Representative for Yemen's Transition and economic assistance agencies.

We coordinate tightly, but we are doing—essentially what you said is the Yemenis bitten off a lot. Have they bitten off too much? I think they have no choice—they view themselves as having no choice but to do it all. They are tackling assiduously the political challenges. They are coming forward slowly to tackle the economic challenges, but I think it is there that the donor community has to continue to provide technical expertise to make up for the lack of capacity that is evident in many of the ministries. And on the security front, we are evaluating on just a constant basis how best we can calibrate our security assistance and training to help the security forces, the military, continue to stand up in terms of their capacity to secure their borders but also to take the fight to al-Qaeda. It is a lot to do. They view themselves as having no choice but to do all at the same time, and we are helping on all of those fronts, in addition to helping with aid that we push through the U.N. principally to help them get their most urgent humanitarian needs met.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. And unfortunately, I have limited time, but let me shift gears a little bit. These are two very different countries with very different challenges, but a common thread for both of them is the fingerprints, if you will, of Iran and Iran trying to influence what is happening. Can you touch a bit on how Iran is trying to affect events in Yemen, and in particular, more so in Bahrain, and efforts of Bahrain to counter that influence?

Ms. LEAF. As you are probably aware, there was—the Yemenis seized the dhow of Iranian origin with arms last January that was clearly en route to support elements of the Houthis community. I don't want to tar the whole Houthis population in Yemen to suggest that they are sort of a backdoor in any sense for Iran. The Houthis have representation in the national dialogue. There are elements, however, who were fighting the central government, and indeed, there were five or six such wars with Saleh's regime over the past years. There is evidence of Iranian meddling. I think it would, as in—and I will speak to it in a minute in Bahrain, but I think it would be best to do this in a restricted session if you want more granularity on it.

On Bahrain, let me say two things. The events of 2011 were Bahraini driven, are Bahraini originated. And at the same time, there has been evidence or concern, certainly expressed by the Bahrainis, and we have seen some evidence that Iran is fostering some of the sectarian sort of conflict, especially by media incitement. Again, I think I would rather do this in a restricted session, if you want to do more.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I would welcome that.

Ms. LEAF. Okay.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. I mean, there is obviously concern about Iranian intentions, and they continue to put pressure on Iran and their in-

fluence in the region, so I would welcome that opportunity. And with that, I have extended my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kinzinger.

Mr. KINZINGER. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I thank you for being here, by the way, today. We appreciate your willingness to be here. I just want to touch on a couple of brief issues. I have seen recent reports that the administration is considering or maybe trying to reengage in the idea of closing Guantanamo and transferring the prisoners to Yemen. I want to ask you first off if you are aware of any effort to do that? Is that in fact true, or is that not true, or—

Ms. LEAF. Thank you, Congressman. Well, the President moved earlier this year to release, essentially, the embargo on returning Yemeni nationals from Guantanamo. But there is a—but there is a case-by-case review of all such cases that has to be done. And it will necessarily hinge on a number of issues, including security issues and the capacity of the Yemeni Government to take back and secure anyone who was transferred. So there is not an immediate—

Mr. KINZINGER. But there is discussion, then?

Ms. LEAF. Yes.

Mr. KINZINGER. And does that discussion include a rehabilitation program like was implemented in Saudi Arabia?

Ms. LEAF. So, there is a U.N. body uniquely which has the resident expertise on these issues, and it has established as steering group. We are part of it, and a number of other countries are part of that effort to look at providing technical assistance to the Yemeni Government, about how to stand up such a program in its early stages. But Cliff Sloan, whom I think you may know is our envoy on Guantanamo closure. He is engaged in those discussions.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay, I just think it is important to point out, in 2009, the GAO report the chairwoman actually commissioned, showed that there was a 20 percent recidivism rate among those, and when you look at a place as unstable as Yemen and you look at, frankly, the challenges they have, I think that is definitely of concern and I think something that ought to be put on the record.

You touched on it briefly, but let's say something like this actually moves forward, and what can we do, how can we ensure that the Yemeni Government has—by the way, I was in Yemen last year and just for a brief period. It was like a 24 hours, but how can we help ensure that they, you know, run the program correctly, they have the resources, and that these guys aren't either taken out of prison or released prematurely?

Ms. LEAF. Congressman, those are all issues that we are looking at in detail. We are—we would be quite concerned to see that any such program is sustainable and is sound. And that is why we, the Yemenis will rely principally on UNICRI to lead this effort. There will undoubtedly be funding needs, but it will be, to say the least, it would be a very methodical effort and one that we will carefully evaluate before moving ahead.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay, and then just briefly to touch on Bahrain, what are the benefits, and I am supportive of it. I just want to hear

it from your end. What are the benefits of having the Fifth Fleet headquartered in Bahrain?

Ms. LEAF. Well, the Fifth Fleet has been there for decades, as you know, and the Bahrainis have provided a level of support and access to necessary facilities that is really unparalleled. They have also been ready and able participants in both exercises for our fleet as well as partners in security operations going back to Desert Storm, and most recently in Afghanistan, where they provided security forces to guard our forces in the Helmand Province. It is a longstanding relationship. It is, as I say, they have been unstinting in their support for our needs there, that spanned, you know, the spectrum of the CENTCOM AOR.

Mr. KINZINGER. Okay, great.

I yield back, thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much.

Now I am pleased to yield to Mr. Chabot, the chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Just a couple of questions. I was also in Yemen about a year ago, I guess, and we actually went to another country prior to that and in the air we learned that over 100 troops had been killed on parade grounds and an explosion, and I don't know if we were still going to come. We did. But the concern I guess a lot of us have at this point, is how is the vetting now amongst those types of things compared to back then? I mean, these were actually, to my recollection they were a number of people that were either troops, or dressed up as troops. I think they were troops that had actually been responsible for the explosion. And my recollection is it was like 100-plus killed and 200-plus wounded. I don't remember if it was a graduation ceremony, but it was something, you know, somewhat festive occasion, so it hit the country extremely hard, and so anything you would like to comment on that, or anything following that, I would be interested.

Ms. LEAF. It indeed was a shocking incidence of AQAP's ability to reach in and strike, and indeed, over these past months, what we have seen is after a period last year when the government essentially pushed AQAP out of pieces of the south that it was essentially holding territory, what you have got now is a more dispersed AQAP that focuses on sort of guerilla tactics and asymmetrical attacks against Yemeni forces.

You know, I wish there were a silver-bullet approach to this. There isn't. We know it. The Yemenis know it. It requires a very methodical kind of capacity building across both conventional forces as well as more elite units, and that is something that we are engaged in as well as the range of traditional professional military education tools and so forth. But it is something we really have bitten into and that we are very committed to.

Mr. CHABOT. Okay, thank you, and my second question relative to Yemen is, you just touched on it, and that is that at the time, there were pretty significant portions of the southern part of the country that were under AQAP's control, and they have had some success there, but success also sometimes breeds other difficulties, and that is the dispersal in other areas. Could you discuss the greater challenges that faces and what we are doing to assist the

Yemenis in battling AQAP in its current form rather than when it was in a certain area?

Ms. LEAF. I think if you would allow me, I would like to default to a restricted setting on that.

Mr. CHABOT. All right, that is fine. That is fine. Thank you. Let me shift over to Bahrain just for a moment then. And they are obviously in relatively close proximity to Iran, as the other Gulf states are, and they are very wary of Iran, and in the recent things which almost occurred in Geneva, I am just wondering what the administration is hearing from some of those countries that are very close relative to possible loosening of the sanctions on nuclear weapons with respect to Iran in return for at least concessions on paper on moving in the other direction on the nuclear program?

Are we hearing concerns from those countries, especially Bahrain? I would assume that we are.

Ms. LEAF. Thank you, Congressman.

We are engaged in sort of a constant rolling conversation with the Gulf countries, including Bahrain, on these issues. And in September, on the margins of the U.N., we had the third session of the US-GCC strategic cooperation forum, and that was a forum in which we talked in detail about their anxiety levels, which are longstanding. This is not new. Bahrain, as you say, has some more acute concerns, especially given sort of the historically irredentist tendencies of Iran vis-à-vis Bahrain and the tendency to direct problematic broadcasting in Bahrain.

But we have used not only that form but very high level conversations on a very ongoing basis, including Secretary Kerry's most recent trip through the Gulf, to reaffirm the depth of our commitment to their security, one and all, including Bahrain.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you.

I yield back.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you very much.

Mr. Weber of Texas.

Mr. WEBER. Gosh, I am thinking all my answers are going to be in a classified setting.

Do you believe, Ms. Leaf, that al-Qaeda in that area has been decimated?

Ms. LEAF. I can only refer—I can only repeat exactly what the President said in May. It is the most active affiliate targeting and plotting against the homeland.

Mr. WEBER. Would you hazard—well, let me put it this way. You are getting help—we are getting help from the FBI and the CIA actively engaged I am assuming.

Ms. LEAF. Uh-huh.

Mr. WEBER. Okay, would you hazard a guess as to how many al-Qaeda fighters there are in both of those countries?

Ms. LEAF. I wouldn't in this setting, you are absolutely right. But I would be happy to look for that and get it to you in a—

Mr. WEBER. Okay, a lot of workers, Yemeni workers kicked out. Of course, the Saudis announced they were halting aid and kicking out workers. There is a strain between us and the Saudis over what is going on in the peace process.

Do you think, is that a good, is that a fair and accurate assessment? Do you think that is why it is happening?

Ms. LEAF. Actually, I would like to correct a misapprehension here. The Saudis are not halting aid. In fact, I discussed a range of assistance issues with them when I was there this past week, and they are actually acceding to some additional bilateral requests that the Yemeni Government made recently.

The worker issue is a separate one, and it is part of a larger push to essentially legalize all workers in the country. Obviously, and the Yemenis raised this with me, the Yemeni Government raised their concerns about the economic effect of these workers coming back.

What I heard back from the Saudis was they were in no way targeting the Yemenis. They do want everybody to regularize, and they said it obviously behooves them and the Yemeni Government to have a more structured discussion of that. So I think that would be—that is something we will encourage.

Mr. WEBER. So, in your discussion, you are not hearing any mention of the peace process going on between John Kerry about the sanctions with Iran?

Ms. LEAF. Oh, you mean with the Saudis?

Mr. WEBER. Uh-huh.

Ms. LEAF. No. No. No that was, I mean the—

Mr. WEBER. I am talking about you personally.

Ms. LEAF. Of course. I mean, I didn't discuss the peace process. I discussed the range of regional issues with the Saudis when I was there last week.

Mr. WEBER. And they tied it to the peace process, which you didn't discuss?

Ms. LEAF. No. No. They did not.

Mr. WEBER. They did not tie it to the peace process?

Ms. LEAF. No.

Mr. WEBER. So they didn't raise that concern about our apparent path to easing the sanctions on Iran? They have not raised that with you.

Ms. LEAF. No. They had a full, full discussion of that between the king and Secretary Kerry as well as other cabinet ministers, yes.

Mr. WEBER. And US aid to Yemen has spread across a number of different program areas. Two questions. Is all of our aid getting marked? When we send aid into a country, USA, there has been some discussion about taking off our stamp so that some of the insurgents won't go right at it or the people receiving it. Are we experiencing that in those countries?

Ms. LEAF. Let me get back to you. I don't believe so, but let me get back to you on that, sir.

Mr. WEBER. Well, then a follow-up question is, you may or may not know the answer is, of those programs, which one is yielding us the best bang for the buck?

Ms. LEAF. In Yemen, I would say without question the support that we have provided to the national dialogue; technical expertise, mentoring of delegates, you know, legal and other expertise provided to help them shape their discussions.

Mr. WEBER. And you may have answered this question earlier, and that is we are seeing, I am hoping or I am guessing we are seeing heightened awareness of security concerns in that area? In

other words, we don't want to repeat a Benghazi, obviously. So what is being done to prevent that?

Ms. LEAF. In terms of our mission in Sana'a, yes. No, we have an extraordinarily robust set of security arrangements there for our mission and for the facility where our people are housed. And I would obviously not want to go into those in detail here. We are doing enhancements that build on others of the last couple of years, but security is front and center for us there.

Mr. WEBER. Madam Chair, I yield to the classified setting.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. And we do look forward to maybe having a session with you in a classified setting in order to answer Mr. Weber's—

Ms. LEAF. Absolutely.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Concerns and others.

I just have one last question, and I will have Mr. Deutsch ask one last question as well.

As we speak, Senator Kelly Ayotte is presenting an amendment to the NDAA bill prohibiting the U.S. from any transfers of GTMO detainees to Yemen or to the United States.

Do you care to comment on that amendment?

Ms. LEAF. Well, I can only affirm—reaffirm the President's policy on this which is to see a closure, an eventual closure of the facility. As to the issue of returning Yemeni nationals, detainees to Yemen, obviously, that is part of the closure of the facility. We have, as I indicated, a very thorough understanding of the challenges that relate to doing so, and we would only do so in a very careful, methodical fashion that would be in our national security interests.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you ma'am, Mr. Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you.

The remaining questions I have I would also like to ask in a classified setting.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. So we look forward to doing that.

And with that, the subcommittee is adjourned. Thank you. Thank you to our Capitol Police officers.

[Whereupon, at 3:33 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa
Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Chairman

November 12, 2013

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, to be held in Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building (and available live on the Committee website at www.foreignaffairs.house.gov):

DATE: Tuesday, November 19, 2013
TIME: 2:30 p.m.
SUBJECT: U.S. Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula: Yemen and Bahrain
WITNESS: Ms. Barbara Leaf
Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Arabian Peninsula
U.S. Department of State

By Direction of the Chairman

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-225-5021 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.



COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON the Middle East and North Africa HEARING

Day Tuesday Date 11/19/13 Room 2172

Starting Time 2:30 p.m. Ending Time 3:33 p.m.

Recesses ☐ (to) (to) (to) (to) (to) (to)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman Ros-Lehtinen (FL)

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

U.S. Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula: Yemen and Bahrain

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

(See attached)

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: *(Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)*

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 3:33 p.m.


Subcommittee Staff Director

Hearing Attendance**Hearing Title:** U.S. Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula: Yemen and Bahrain**Date:** 11/19/13*Noncommittee Members*

Member	Present
Ros-Lehtinen, Ileana (FL)	X
Chabot, Steve (OH)	X
Wilson, Joe (SC)	
Kinzinger, Adam (IL)	X
Cotton, Tom (AR)	X
Weber, Randy (TX)	X
Desantis, Ron (FL)	
Radel, Trey (FL)	
Collins, Doug (GA)	
Meadows, Mark (NC)	
Yoho, Ted (FL)	X
Messer, Luke (IN)	

Member	Present
Deutch, Ted (FL)	X
Connolly, Gerald (VA)	X
Higgins, Brian (NY)	
Cicilline, David (RI)	
Grayson, Alan (FL)	
Vargas, Juan (CA)	
Schneider, Bradley (IL)	X
Kennedy, Joseph (MA)	X
Meng, Grace (NY)	
Frankel, Lois (FL)	